

JUNE
NO. 5

THIS MAGAZINE IS **HAUNTED**

10¢

*FASTEN YOUR HAND ACROSS YOUR
MOUTH TO HOLD BACK THE
SCREAM WHEN YOU READ...*

**THE SLITHERING
HORROR OF
SKONTONG SWAMP!**



THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED

Executive Editor
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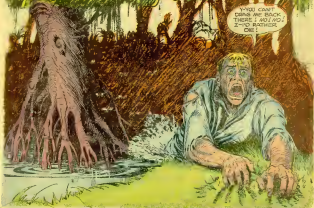
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AL BITTER

SOMETHING RAYED IN THE MIDDING MID---GLAY AND
RESENTILIAN : SOME REED, UNDRUCKY FORM THAT FORKED
AND CLAYED AND BRACHED OUT FOR "GOLD" RICON-----
TO SLAMMERHE HIM, FORMER IN

The Slithering Horror of Skontong Swamp!

Y-YOU CAN'T
COME AND BACK
THERE ! NO ! NO !
I-NO RATHER
ONE !



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THE WHILING
CHATTERING VOICES
OF GOALS IN
TORMENT!
HERE THEY
COULD BE
HEARD, THE
CONVINCED
WAITING TO
BE IN THE
DEATH-ROCK OF
THE SKONTONG
PRISONERY;
BUT THERE WAS
ONE WHO DID
NOT RAUCOUS
OR GUAL----
CADAVEROUS,
SHIT-EYES
POISONED.
NUMBER 121029...
**GOLDIE
RICO!**

IT'S YOUR
TURN NEXT,
GOLDIE--BUT
YOU'RE NOT
FEELING OR
ANYTHING,
ARE YOU?
AFRAID TO--
TO GO TO THE
OTHER
SIDE?

THE ONLY PLACE
I'M FOCUSING
ON GOING...IS
OUT OF HERE!
THEY WAGNET
GOT ME YET---
NOT BY A LONG
SHOT!



WATCH WHAT HAPPENS WHEN
THAT WARDEN GETS HERE!
I'M GONNA SEE HIM TO GET ME
BUILT DOWN THE BACK COR-
RIDOR ACCESS TO THE SOUTH

YOU'LL NEVER
DO IT! EVEN IF YOU
DO--YOU'LL BE
SENT INTO SKON-
TONG SWAMP!



A LOT OF OTHER BOYS
TRIED IT---BUT THEY
CAME BACK GRIPPING
LIKE IDIOTS! SOMETHING
IS WRONG OVER IN THAT
SWAMP---SOMETHING SO
TERRIBLE THEY COULDN'T
TALK ABOUT IT!



BUT GOLDIE'S
DESPERATE
BRAIN WAS
ATTUNED TO
ONE IDEA--
ESCAPE!
ESCAPE!
IT FLEW
SIDE HIS HEAD
LIKE A TICKING
CLOCK! AND
WHEN THEY
ORDERED HIM
TO LEAD
HIM TO THE
CHAMBER OF
EXECUTION--

ARE YOU
READY, GOLDIE?
THE TIME HAS
COME!

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING
LIKE THE CONFESOR,
WARDEN? IN THE
GUYS GOT TO GO!



THIS IS A TRICK
THAT SHOULD FALL
TO NO MAN! EACH
TIME I APPROACH
IT I FEEL THAT I
AM FIVE YEARS
OLD!



GRAB---ONE MOVE,
AND YOU SO BEFORE
WE WARDEN! GAWD
THOSE KEYS! WE'RE
GOING TO THE SOUTH
WALL!

YOU'RE INSANE,
GOLDIE---NO MAN
CAN SURVIVE THE
SKONTONG SWAMP!



THEY'RE STUPID CRAZY!
THE WHOLE LOT ON
THEM I'LL SHOW
THEM ALL!



GIVE UP NOW,
GOLDIE! WHY
EXTEND THE
AGONY! YOU'RE
ONLY GOING TO
PUT YOURSELF
THROUGH UNIMAGIN-
ABLE TORTURE!

GET SOME, WARDEN!!!
IS THAT A LIE YOU'VE BEEN
FEEDING TO KEEP THESE
BOMB-HEADS SUPPRESSED!
IT DON'T WORK ON THIS
BOY!



THE ALARMS
SPREAD CHAOS!
THE PRISON
BECAME AN
ARMED CAMP--!
AS THE TWO
MEN APPROACHED
THE SOUTH-
GATE, GLARES
LIGHTS HURLED
THEM OUT AND
GUNS WERE
TRAINED FOR
ONE FALSBY
MOVE!

GET THOSE BLINKERS OFF
ME, YOU SNOOB! AND USE
THE ELECTRICAL GAGGET
ON THE GATE OR YOU'RE
ISSUING THE WARDEN A
DEATH WARRANT!



NOW--LET'S
GET OUT OF
HERE! I--

SHOOT, MEN,
SHOOT--!!



DEFENT UPON
THE TOWER
GUARD, GOLDIE
WAS CAUGHT
UNAWARES BY THE
WARDEN'S WANDER-
VING FLUNKIES OF
THE NIGHT!

BANG!
BANG!
RAT-A-TAT!
TAT-TAT-TAT!

GO TO GET INTO THESE
WOODS!





UHH! THE MUD SUCKS
MY FEET DOWN ANGLE
DEEP! MUST MOVE FASTER
---FASTER!

Every step
became an excruciating
effort as he
trudged on
deeper and
deeper into
the swampland.
The brush
and brambles
tearing at
his clothes,
grinding his
flesh!



I--I GOT TO REST ANGLE! NO--
THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY! I CAN
HEAR THOSE WAPPING HOUNDS!
I'LL DUCK HERE!



HE COULDN'T HAVE
GONE MUCH FURTHER!
WATCH YOUR STEP---
YOU'LL BARK IN UP TO
YOUR KNEES!

RUFF RUFF RUFF



THEY'LL NEVER GET ME---
NEVER! UHH---WHEAT'S THAT
SMELL? LIKE BURNING
FLESH!



S-SOMETHING IS
SLITHERING UP AGAINST
ME!



WHEN---OUT OF THE DARKNESS---CAME TWO FEROCY BURNING
ORBS! SCULKS STRAINED TO MAKE OUT THE BEST! AND WHEN HE
DID---THE TERRIBLE VISAGE TURNED HIS BLOOD INTO CRYSTALS OF
ICE! IT WAS A SUSHYAN FACE! WIDENING AND CHARRING BLACK
---AND IT CRAWLED UP ON ALL FOURS!

AAAAAAAAA!

ROGER LINDS
REACHED OUT
FOR HIM, AND
GOLDS TOOK
DRIN BACK IN
AMBUSH—
IT TRIED TO
DRAG HIM
DEEPER INTO THE
SWAMP AND
HE STRUGGLED
—REMOVING
ALL THE WHILE
FROM THE
PAINFUL GAZE
OF BURNING
FLESH!



LOSING ALL CAUTION, HE FLED DIRECTLY ACROSS THE OPEN FIELDS; ON AND ON HE FLED, FEAR DRIVING HIM BEYOND HUMAN ENDURANCE; AND WHEN THE GRAY OF DAWN ETCHED THE SKY—



THE VICIOUS SWASH
ACROSS THE UN-
WARY ATTENDANT'S
SKIN WITH A FORT-
BENT-- AND GOLDBE
PULSED THROUGH
WITH HIS PLAN IN
HAND SUCCESSION!

SOMEWHAT LATER,
IN A FURNISHED
ROOM ACROSS
TOWN, A BEAUTIFUL,
SLIMLY BUILDING
A THIN, STAMPT
MAN--AND A WOMAN
LOOKED MAN WITH
A BLACK BAG, MADE
AN APPEARANCE.
OLD ASSOCIATES
OF GOLDBE'S!

OH--IT'S YOU! IT'S ABOUT
TIME! DID YOU GET THE DOG?
MY SHOULDER IS KILLING ME!

WE GOT HIM,
GOLDBE-- BUT WE
HAD A HARD TIME
LOCATING HIM!

--GOLDBE!
Y-YOU LOOK
TERRIBLE!
YOUR EYES
ARE kinda
WILD!

AH, SHADOOP! HOW'S
A SET SUPPORTED TO
LOOK WHEN HE JUST
ESCAPED THE HOT
BENT? GET TO HIS
SHOULDER, DOC!



GOLDBE WAS SWIFT
INTO A SERIES OF SHARP
DELIVERIES-- TRYING TO
DISCOVER WHAT HAD
ENCOUNTERED, AS THE
DOCTOR WITH HORRIFIED
EYES, PROBED HIS
STRANGE WOUND!

--THE THING
IN THE SHAMP.
--THEY GRABBED
ME! ALL BLACK
AND ROTTED--

I NEVER SAW A CREAK
LIKE THAT! TEETH
WASHER--AND THE
EDGES OF THE FLESH
CHARRED AND BLIND!
WHEEE ALLEGATIONS!



ALLEGATIONS! YEAH--MAYBE THEY
WERE! IT WAS SO DARK AND I COULDN'T
SEE STRAIGHT ANYONE! SERE--WHY
DON'T I THINK OF THAT! I WAS
JUST BRIBING THINGS!



S-SURE--I'M GRAY!
GOLDBE OUTSMARTED
THE COPE AGAIN! I
--THEY'LL NEVER
BURN ME! S-SURE
TO GET SOME
SLEEP!

SO AHEAD--
STUMPY AND
WE WILL STICK
AROUND AND
KEEP OUR EYES
OPEN!



HOURS LATER--IN THE
DARKNESS OF THE ROOM
WHERE HE SLEPT, GOLDBE
WAS SEIZED WITH A TROUBLED
WAKENING. HE
STOOD UP, AS IF IN
A DYNAMICAL
MYSTIC TRANCE, AND
STARTED WALK--



OH--GOLDBE OFF? I
GUESS! HEY--GOLDBE'S
GONE! RED--GOLDBE'S
GONE!



MEANWHILE, GUIDED BY A WILL STRONGER THAN HIS OWN, GOLDIE STALKED OUT OF THE BUILDING, ALONG THE DESERTED STREETS. THE LONG, BLACK SHADOWS WERE LIKE AN OVERCAST OF DEATH. DEEPLY, HE WAS JERKED TO RIDE WAKEFULNESS.





ON THE THRESHOLD OF AN UNCOVERABLE PAIN -- EVERY MOLE -- CLE IN GOLDIE ROOM'S BODY CRIED OUT FOR FLIGHT -- ALSO, DIRECTIONLESS -- UNUSUAL -- NO FLIGHT! HE RAN DOWN THE LONG ALLEY -- THE HAULING SIRENS -- LIKE WHIRLS -- AROUND IN THE NIGHT! AND THERE --





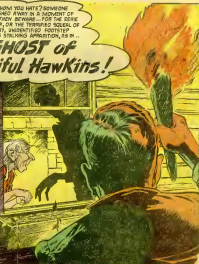
AND SO... BEFORE A WEEK HAD OVER, THE GREAT RITUAL WAS REPEATED. GOLDIE REON WAS LED TO THE CHAMBER OF EXECUTION! BUT THIS TIME... HE WAS REMOVED BY THE HARNESS OF DEATH! BEFORE THE RITUAL, AND HIS FACE WAS ALIGHT WITH A KIND OF ELATION AND HE SCREAMED!



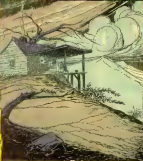


IS THERE SOMEONE WHOM YOU HATE? SOMEONE WHOSE LIFE YOU'D RYANED AWAY IN A MOMENT OF HISTERICAL ANGER? THEN BEWARE... FOR THE DEER CREAMING OF A DOOR, OR THE TERRIFIED SQUEAL OF A CAT, OR A STEALTHY, UNIDENTIFIED FOOTSTEP MAY FOREWARN HIS STALKING APPRAHENSION, SOM...

The GHOST of Fanciful Hawkins!



OUT ACROSS THE
DESOLATE,
WINDBLOWN,
MISTY HILL
COUNTRY,
THE DAY
PAID LIKE A
DINGY THING,
AND THE
STONY SOBY
GARDENS
BENT A
MOURNFUL,
MELANCHOLY
CURVE OVER
ALL. IT WAS THEN
THE FORCING
EYE MIGHT
CATCH A SCUMPER
OF THE SHALL,
HUBBLED FIGURE
OF THE SHARLED
OLD WOMAN IN
THE MOONING CHAIR
ON THE PORCH OF
THE OLD HOUSE
ON ROCKY ALL.



SEE THE FACE OF THE OLD CRONE—A
FACE WRINKLED LIKE OLD PARCHMENT!
THE STRANDED VACANT SMILE IN THE
DISSET EYE SOCKETS! THERE IS GRIEF
AND SURPRISING THING, AND YET UPON HER
LIPS—A STRANGELY ENIGMATIC SMILE!

HEH-HEH!
HEH-HEH!



WHAT SECRETLY UNDERHUNG SATISFACTION IS THIS OLD CROONER'S, THAT SHE SITS SO CONTENTEDLY IN THE GRACK EVEN AS THE CHILL WIND WHIPS HER RIGID BONES! COME, IF YOU CARE, DEAR REDDER—AND LET US STEP INTO HER THOUGHTS!



ON A BRIGHT, SUMMER-BEDCHED DAY IN THE HILL COUNTRY, SIXTY-EIGHT LONG YEARS AGO, A TALL AND GRIMLY DUNKY AND STOMPED NOT BIG FEET DOWN UPON THE SUN-BROWNED EARTH, HIS HEART AS FREE AS THE SOARING SKYLARKS!



CRACK YOUR CROWN—
DRINK YOUR HANGOVER
STRAIGHT—AND
SET TILL THE SUN
GOES DOWN!

"HEY, HUGH—LOOK
AT THAT! PRINCIPAL
NOTHING HIMSELF!"

"CAN'T MISTAKE
THOSE FEET NOWHAY!
COME ON, LET'S HAVE
SOME RUN."



LED BY HIS BROAD, BRASSING AUGH WITHERS, THE
IMPLICIT TOWN HOSTELS ASSAULTED UNCERTAIN
PRINCIPAL WITH MOORING TUNTS!

THOSE CAN'T BE SHOPS—NO SURE!
THEIR'S REGULAR CAT-FISHIN' BOATS!
PRINCIPAL—YOU LOOK LIKE THE SCAMS—
CROW OFF FLOP MALLOWPS
OLD SCUM LARD!

BOY! I DON'T
KNOW WHERE
YOU THEM UP
THEIR THINGS,
HUGH! YOU SURE
ARE A JOY!



HE'S SPROUTING
LIKE A STRINGSBORN,
POLLERS! BUT HE
COULD PRUNE A
TREE WITHOUT—

HUGH—
LOOK
WHO'S
ACCOMH! IT'S HELL!



WAS AT THE MOMENT WHEN THEY
CAME DELIBERATELY CLOSE TO
PRINCIPAL, THAT THE GIRL STOPPED
AND KNEW, SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL,
ABUNDANT, AND AS FREE AS THE APPLE
BLOSSOMS! SHE WALKED HARDLY
PAST HUGH, HER EYES SHINING ONLY
FOR PRINCIPAL'S GRIMORS!

WELL, GLAD TO SEE YOU! I WAS
MEANING TO ASK YOU TO BE MY
PARTNER AT THE SQUARE DANCE!



HELLO,
PRINCIPAL!

WOW WHAT DOES THAT PRETTY
GIRL SEE IN THAT SCRAWNY
MOUNTAIN RABBIT?



THE BOY'S
PREDICAMENT
FEARED, AS
THE JAC,
BRADY
BRADY
WAS
GIVEN
ON BY HIS
SHOCKING
COMPANIONS!

THERE AIN'T A FELLER IN
THE COUNTY WOULDN'T
GIVE HIS EYE-TEETH
FOR LITTLE NELL, BUT
NO ONE CAN TAKE
HER AWAY FROM
FANGELL ANYMORE!
GUESS THAT DOES
FOR YOU, TOO,
BOOM!

I'VE WAITED
FOR THAT GIL
LONG ENOUGH!
I'LL PUT AN END TO
THIS! THAT LOP-EARED
HYENA IS GOING TO
GET OUT OF MY WAY—
RIGHT NOW!

COME ON—IF YOU
WANT TO SEE A
REAL SHOW!

THIS OUGHT TO BE
GOOD!



PRESENTLY, CONCERNED BY THE HEAVY BASH NEAR
THE RIVER, WHERE FANGELL AND NELL KEPT A ROMAN-
TIC, JOHN WITHERS IMPARTIENTLY ABANDONED HIS FINE, HIS
BASS GRINDER AS WELL KISSED THE TALL MOUNTAIN
BOY APPROXIMATE!

NOW! I'D GIVE MY NEW
SUITS' SACS TO BE
IN FANGELL'S
PLACE!

THAT'S THE LAST TIME
HE'LL EVER KISS THAT
GAL—I SWEAR IT!



THE BROAD-SHOULDERED
BULLY LASHED OUT AT
THE UNRESISTING
MOUNTAIN LAD WITH A
MASSIVE KICK!

THAT'LL TEACH YOU
TO KISS AWAY FROM
MY GIL! WELL IS WINE!

WUN!



WE'RE AGAIN TO BE REPEATED!
I BUILT US A HOUSE UP ON HICKORY
HILL—AND THAT'S THE WAY
IT'S GONNA BE!



7 THE MOUNTAIN BOY WAS NO MATCH FOR THE FORMIDABLY MUSCLED ALON, BUT FRANCIS WAS OUT TO DO HIMSELF JUSTICE! THE BIG MAN SHOOK HIS SPINDLY FRAME WITH HEAVY BLOWS AGAIN AND AGAIN... BUT FRANCIS WOULDNT TURN BACK!



I'LL POUND YOUR GRADING TO A SPARROW'S PICKINGS!

HEAVY HANDY--THEY--
DIDN'T--UNDERSTAND--
OF YOURS!

OWW,
HURT FOOT!
OW!



7 THE LONG, LEAN FRAME OF THE MOUNTAIN BOY SLITHERED INTO THE WATERS LIKE A WEIGHTED REED! FOR A MOMENT, HIS HAND PAIVED AGAINST AN OBSTACLE TO CLUTCH THE SKY--AND THEN, HE WAS GONE... FOREVERMORE!



HOW WITHERS VIEWED HAWKINS' PRESSURE AS COLD-BLOODEDLY AS HE HAD GROUND OUT A CATERPILLAR CRAWLING HIS PATH! FOR LATER THAT NIGHT, ALL DROVE UP, A BOULET IN HAND, HE STARTED OUT FOR NELL'S PLACE!



IT WAS THEN A FLASH OF JAGGED LIGHTNING RENT THE
 HEAVENS LIKE AN EMERALD SNAKE! AND CLUMBED
 IN THE ROAD AS PLAINLY AS DAY, FOR HUGH'S FORTIFIED
 EYES TO SEE, WERE



FANCIFUL'S
 SHOES!



THEY'RE COMING
 AFTER ME!



AIEEEEE!

FUROR-STRICKEN, HUGH FLED IN A MIND THAT WAS
 DIRECTIONLESS! THE WATER-LOGGED SHOES CLOUDED
 RELENTLESSLY AFTER HIM! HE RAN PAST BARNARD'S HILL,
 AND BY THE HOUSE FANCIFUL BUILT FOR HELL! AND THERE,
 PROSTRATE UPON THE STEPS.



HELL! IT'S RAINING!
 WHAT ARE YOU
 DOING HERE?



THE SOBBED-WRATCHED FIGURE WHIRLED AT THE
 SOUND OF HUGH'S VOICE AND LASHED AT HIM WITH
 WORDS OF ACCUSATION!

YOU--! YOU MURDERER!
 YOU DID FANCIFUL IN!
 I KNOW YOU DID!

I SAID NO,
 NELL! I WAS JUST
 DROWNING! IT WAS
 AN ACCIDENT!



I--I HEAR THEM
 COMING AGAIN! THEY'RE
 STILL AFTER ME!

HE RAN LEANING AGAINST HIS FACE! THE HURRY-
ING BATH SUCKED AT HIS HASTENING STEPS!
WHIPPED ON BY HIS NIGHTMARRISH FEARS, ALUCH
WITHERED AWAY ON HIS LIMBS BURNING WITH EX-
HAUSTION! THROUGH THE TOWN, AND TO HIS HOUSE!
THEN...



HE DOUBLED TO HIS BED AND
COLLAPSED UPON IT. FOR TWO
HOURS HE LAY THERE, TOO HEAVY TO
GET UP, TOO FEARFUL TO CLOSE HIS
EYES IN SLUMBER! SUDDENLY, HE
PULLED THE COVERS OVER HIS HEAD!



WITH FEARS TOO GREAT FOR CONTINEMENT,
ALUCH BURST INTO THE STREETS, SCREAMING
ALoud!



DAUGHTERS FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF THEIR AID, THE ORDINARY SUPERSTITIOUS MILL-FOLK SECURED THE CORNERS OF THE COUNTRYIDE, TORCHES FLICKERING IN THE NOW DRIZZLING DRIZZLE! THEN.....

LOOK--THE HOUSE
FIREFUL BUILT TO TIME
AS BRIDE TO! A LIGHT IS
ON IN IT! WE'D BETTER
TAKE A LOOK!

OH--THE LORD
PRESERVE US!



WITH FOUR-DIGGING HEARTS THEY CRAFT
A CANNIBAL GLOVE! AND THERE IN THE WINDOW
WAS...

WELL! SHE SITS
THERE STARRING AT
THROUGH HER SOUL
AND LEFT HER!



I THINK MYIDE
HIGH WAS TRYING
A BIG DREAM!

COULD BE HE HAD TOO MUCH OF
THAT CORN LICKER OF HIS AND!
I SAY LET'S GO HOME
AND TURN IN!



BUT THERE
WAS NO
SLEEP AND NO
REST FOR
HUSH WITHERS
IN THE DAYS
TO COME!
EVERYWHERE
DAY AND NIGHT,
THE UNBROKEN
FOOTSTEPS
FOLLOWED
BEHIND HIM--
AND EVERY-
WHERE, LIKE
MURDERING
DEMONS, THE
SILVERHEADS
SPUNN INTO
FIREWORK LIFE!



1 LAST, HEARD AND MOAN, NERVES FRAYED BY EACH SEPARATE SUDDER SOUND--THE DEFLATED BULST PACKED IN HURRIED DESPAIR TO LEAVE TOMMY! HE HOPED TO LEAVE BEHIND, FOREVER--THE ACCLERATED SPECTRE THAT HOUNDED HIM FOR HIS NAUGHTY DEED!

WHAT'S THAT? A STRANGE GLOW DRIFTING ACROSS THE CEMETERY! U-LOOKS LIKE A BALL OF FIRE!

I-I'LL CATCH THE BUS AT CLAYTONVILLE AND I'LL NEVER COME BACK TO THIS PLACE!



EVEN AS BOBBY STOOD, AGONY TO THE BARKS, PARALYZED BY THE SUDDER, ACCELERATED PAINFUL BURN--A PHANTOM FIGURE MATERIALIZED, ETCHED WITH LIVED SCARLET FLAMES!



WEEEE



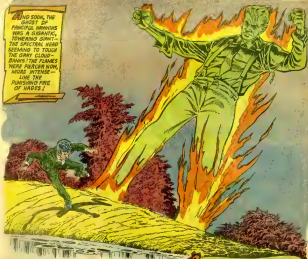
W-WHAT'S AFTER ME! NO--NO!

2 THE TERRIBLE WEIGHT OF THE RESSURRECTED FANCIAL HAVIRING MOVED QUAINTLY CREEPY! AND AS IT DID--A TERRIFYING THING OCCURRED!

IT'S GETTING DARKER--AND BIGGER--AND BIGGER! NO! LET ME ALONE!



AND SOON, THE
GHOST OF
FIERCEST BRAVADO
WAS A GIGANTIC,
TOWERING SUMMIT—
THE SPECTRAL HEAD
SEEMING TO TOUCH
THE GRAY CLOUD-
BANKS! THE FLAMES
WERE FIERCE NOW,
MORE INTENSE—
LIKE THE
PUNISHING FIRE
OF HADES!



"IN THE RIVER! CAN'T
MOVE! ON—I'M A
FALLING LEAF!"



SPLASH

A
FROG CEESED HIS CROAKING—AND
THEN, THERE WAS A SILENCE OVER ALL!
ONLY THE GENTLE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES
MARKED THE SPOT WHERE RUGH WITHERS
HAD DEPARTED FROM THE WORLD OF
LIVING MEN!



A OLD REFUSE AND CHAINED TO HEAR THE SCUD-GRINDING SCREAMS AND HE SUMMONED THE TOWNFOLK!



"WE BEEN LOOKING FOR TWO HOURS--AND NO SIGN OF HIGH WINDERS' BODY! I SAY IT'S NOT EVEN HERE!"

"SAY--THIS IS THE EXACT DRAIN SPOT THEY SAID FANGFUL DROWNED!"

"NO USE--LET'S GET BACK HOME AND FINISH THE NIGHT'S SLEEP!"

"I SAY ALL THESE GOINGS-ON ARE JUST A LOT OF HOGWASH! THAT HIGH JEST! WENT CRAZY 'CAUSE HE COULDN'T GET LITTLE HELL!"



"HEY--WHAT'S THAT? SOMEONE LAUGHING LIKE CRAZY!"

"I--IT'S COMING FROM FANGFUL'S HOUSE!--AT THIS UNHOLY HOUR!"

HA HA HEE HEE!

CORRIGITY WAS GREATER THAN CAUTION--AND THE UNWITTING, ALREADY DREW THEM CLOSER AND CLOSER TO THE HOUSE ON MEMORY HILL! THEN--PEERED THROUGH THE WINDOW OF THE GLICKERING LIGHT FROM WITHIN, THEY SAW A FRIGHTENING, HEART-CONTERING SIGHT!

"IT'S HELL---AND SHE'S BASHING WITH FANGFUL HANKING!"



"LORD PROTECT US!"

"A CURSE HAS BEFALLEN HIDDEN ADOR!"

AND...THE YEARS HAVE FLOWN, AND WINTER AND SUMMER DANCED THEIR ENDLESS DOWD-LAY IN ALDEN HIGHLAND (ALL HAS CHANGED, EXCEPT THE HOUSE ON MEMORY HILL, AND THE UNHOLY VIGILANT OF THE SPIRIT OF FANGFUL BASHING IN THE SHAKING OLD CRONE!





HORROR AT MIDNIGHT

By John Martin

DOCTOR HOMER WIGGINS leafed through the list of available houses at Clem Farley's real estate establishment in Henshaw.

Clem Farley watched him narrowly. "If it's price you're worried about . . ." he began.

"I'm not interested in price," Doc Wiggins said. "I want isolation, Mr. Farley. That's why I came to Henshaw. You've got a beautiful village here with all the comforts a body could want. And yet you're twenty miles from the nearest big town. That's the sort of seclusion I want." He chuckled and threw a friendly glance at Farley. "You see, I've been practicing medicine for forty years now, and I want a rest!"

"Fine!" Clem Farley said. "In that case, you'd better live closer to the center of town than up Nether Mountain!"

"Why?" the doctor asked.

"It's quieter—much quieter," Clem Farley said with conviction.

"Quieter, near the center of the village?" Doc Wiggins asked in astonishment.

"That's what I said," Farley said dryly. "Mory Cadden lives near the top of Nether Mountain."

"Mory Cadden?" the doctor exclaimed. "Why, that's all I've heard about in Henshaw since I got here last week."

"Not surprising," Farley said. "He's been the talk of this village for as long as I can remember." He paused and then went on, hesitatingly. "There's funny things said of Mory Cadden, Doc. Mighty strange things. And it isn't only the things said about him, either. It's the noises!"

"Noises?" Doc Wiggins glanced at Farley quizzically.

"Now I know you won't believe it, Doc—been a city fellow—but out here in the country folks pay lots more attention to odd things than anywhere else." He glanced apprehensively through the window of his store up toward Nether Mountain. "There's times when odd noises come down from Nether Mountain. Everybody in town hears 'em. Noises like thunder, like gods grumbling or ragin'. And there's lights, too, Doc. Big lights, like flashes

of lightning! Only when they flash, there's usually no storm around!"

Doc Wiggins laughed. "Way to listen to you, Mr. Farley, you'd think that Mory Cadden had sold his soul to the devil!"

"There's devils and devils," Farley said. "And you can laugh if you want to, Doc, but Mory Cadden's been hated in this town for thirty years. There isn't a person in it who'd step beyond his gate."

"He's a man, just like you or me," Doc Wiggins said. "So Rudder, the grocer, pointed Cadden out to me. I've seen him. Just a man. Nothing more—or less."

"Is he?" Clem Farley asked gruffly. "Take a really good look at him some time, Doc. Look at his eyes, look at his face."

"I've seen him—pretty close-up, too," Doc Wiggins said. "I'll admit he's odd-looking. In fact, the first time I saw him I thought he looked like one of those old-fashioned movie villains."

"And good reason," Clem said. "If ever a villain lived, it's Mory Cadden. Dogs won't go near him. Cattle crossin' his land boundary lines have been found dead. He's got the evil eye."

"Nonsense," Doc Wiggins said. "You can't hold a man's looks against him. Why the toughest men I ever knew looked like a preacher. You're talking superstition, Mr. Farley."

"Mebbe so," the real estate man said, "but it's deuced funny how Mory changed so much. I remember him thirty years ago when he was a young man. He had a different kind of face then, a better, kinder face. Then it changed, over the years. There were worse, too . . ."

"What kind of stories?" Doc Wiggins demanded.

"Oh, they used to say that Mory was deathly ill and recovered. But no doctor in Henshaw ever treated him. Besides, where did his money come from?" Farley asked suddenly. "When he buys in town he pays in big bills. Nobody ever saw Mory Cadden do a lick of work!"

"Well, whatever's wrong with Mory Cadden, I'm not afraid of him," Doc Wiggins said. "I've got my heart set on that house half-way

up Nether Mountain—and I'm going to rest it!"

"You're welcome to it, Doc," Farley said with fealty, taking out a lease. "Sign here!"

Doctor Wiggins moved in that evening. The house was comfortable, well-furnished. A telephone connected it with the town exchange. On the third night it rang—at half-past eleven. "That Doctor Wiggins?" the voice asked. The doctor said it was, then: "This is Mory Cadden, Doctor. I'm your neighbor up the mountain." The voice suddenly rasped, became wheezy. "Doc, I've got a bad attack of asthma. Doc Hayburn, our regular medico's, out of town, so I thought you might . . ."

Doc Wiggins assented. He knew how painful asthma could be. Besides, in his coupe he could reach Cadden's place in ten minutes.

The doctor dressed and drove up the road that passed his own house on its way to the mountaintop. Presently the ground levelled off and he came into view of Cadden's house. It was an ordinary frame dwelling, with a commanding view of the countryside. A light burned in the first floor parlor. He got out of the car and knocked at the door.

"Come in," a voice said.

Wiggins opened the door and went in.

"Sit down, Doctor," the man in the rocking chair said.

Close up to Mory Cadden at last, Doc Wiggins shuddered.

"I see they've been talking to you in the village about me, Doctor," Cadden said, his black eyes snapping.

"Small-town gossip," Doc Wiggins said. "It means nothing to me, Mr. Cadden. Things aren't always what they seem to the ignorant, are they?"

Cadden smiled. "Sometimes they are, doctor. Sometimes they are!" he said.

An icy chill went down Doc Wiggins' back. He noticed that Cadden's voice was free of wheeze or rasp. Cadden had lied about his asthma, had faked it over the phone. Then Cadden smiled again, recognizing the fear in Doc's eyes. He looked at the clock over the old fireplace.

"Almost time," he said, "almost midnight. Just five minutes."

"Time for what?" Wiggins asked, shuddering.

"To pay a debt," Cadden said. "You see, Doctor, about one-hundred years ago I almost died. But my life was saved—at a price—by

a remarkable—ah—practitioner. The debt was due in one-hundred years—and tonight the time is up!"

Behind Wiggins a door opened slowly. A draft blew through the room, stirring up the sluggish fire. He tried to turn his head, found he was paralyzed. Cadden looked past him, grinned in recognition. Then he swung his eyes back to Wiggins.

"Why did you call me here?" Wiggins quavered.

"Because you were the only person in town who didn't know me, who wasn't afraid of me—who would have come here at all!" There was a dry, throaty chuckle from Cadden. His deep-lined features shook with humorless mirth. "Don't worry, doctor. You won't be killed. It isn't your body that's in danger—just your soul! You see, the arrangement I made with the practitioner who helped me, allowed me to escape payment of the debt if I could arrange for a substitute."

From behind Wiggins came a thin, voice, edged with mockery.

"Mr. Cadden is right, Doctor," the voice said. "In exchange for you, I 'release' Mr. Cadden to live out the rest of his life—" There was a pause. "You may go, Mr. Cadden!"

Wiggins, horrified, watched Cadden start past him, then stop. All at once he started to grow horribly old, and then he wavered and fell to the floor, dead!

"Between you and me, doctor," the thin, mocking voice resumed, "Cadden was a poor risk at a debtor. He had no friends he might have turned over to me in place of himself. He was forced to use a stranger—yourself. But perhaps you have friends, doctor. Perhaps you and I could strike a bargain. In return for your soul, I might be satisfied with two of your friends. Any of them will do. They can be healthy or sick, it doesn't matter. I—ah—have a certain talent myself in the medical direction. It doesn't do, you see, to have a person die too soon. First the soul must mature to be ripe for the plucking!"

WIGGINS stared at the hideous figure that came now into his range of vision. He swallowed hard, knowing he was trapped, knowing he had to agree, knowing above all how he would sacrifice friend after friend to save himself, how his features would change slowly to a mask of hatred like Cadden's.

"Anything—anything you say," he said finally, trembling. "I guess this time, you're the Doctor."

THE END

THEY HAD A GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING HORRIBLE--BEYOND IMAGINATION--SOMETHING THAT STEMMED FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE--AND AFTER THAT, ALL WERE MARKED FOR DEATH! ALAS, NOW THEY STRUGGLED AND TWISTED AND CLUNG TO THE THIN THREAD OF LIFE ONLY TO SECURE TO....

THE LAST MAN



IT WAS A SMALL, SLERTY CARNIVAL THAT HAD RECHED ITS TENTS IN THE SMALL TOWN! AND IN THE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING, THE HATTER OF THE SHOW--PEOPLE FINDING SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE STRANGE PLACE BECAME THE HARBORER PROBLEM.

COME ON WITH ME! WE'LL FIND A SPOT! AN EMPTY BARN IS JUST AS GOOD AS THAT JOINT THEY CALL A HOTEL--AND WE DON'T PAY FOR IT!

FIVE BUCKS IS FINE BUCKS! MAYBE EDDIE HAS THE ANSWER!

I TELL YOU THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE IN THIS HIGH JOINT AND THEY'RE READING FIVE BUCKS A NIGHT! AND THEY CALL US CLIP ARTISTS!

HELL--WE GOTTA SLEEP SOMEPLACE!



And then, on the PRINCE OF TOWN they SAW IT! ONE WHO ONLY TO GLANCE AT IT ONCE TO KNOW THAT IT WAS DESERTED! BUT EVEN AS THEY LOOKED, THEY FELT SOME THING FOREBODING ABOUT IT!



HOW ABOUT IT, POP? ANYBODY LIVING THERE? WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEPLACE TO BUNK DOWN FOR THE NIGHT!

IT IS THE HAUNTED HOUSE OF THE SEVERS! SAUN IT AS YOU WOULD THE PLASSE!



WAIT--HERE COMES SOME OLD GUYER! LET'S ASK HIM!

THERE'S OUR HOTEL FOR THE NIGHT! WHAT D'YOU SAY WE HOLE UP IN THAT BUNK? IT LOOKS LIKE NOBODY HAS BEEN IN THERE FOR YEARS!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN HAUNTED? WHAT'S THE PITCH?

EDWARD SEVER ONCE LIVED THERE WITH SOME FRIENDS! BUT THAT WAS BEFORE HE KILLED ALL OF THEM WITH THE HANMER--EVERYONE OF THEM!

HE KILLED THEM--?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS--SEVER? DID THEY GET HIM?

YES--THEY EXECUTED HIM! BUT HIS CORPSE DISAPPEARED! SOME SAY THAT'S WHERE HIS CORPSE DWELLS TODAY! IT CAME BACK TO THE SCENE OF ITS CRIME!



THE WARNING CRY OF THE OLD MAN FELL ON DEAF EARS AND THE FOUR SOME MADE THEIR WAY INTO THE FOREBODING HOUSE!

I ALWAYS WANTED TO MEET UP WITH A NICE GHOST! COME ON--ARE YOU GUYS GOING TO LET THAT STORY SCARE YOU AWAY? I'M GOING IN!

DON'T! LISTEN TO AN OLD MAN'S WARNING!

THIS PLACE GIVES YOU THE CREEPS! IT'S STILL GOT THE SMELL OF DEATH!

COME ON--LET'S GO UP--STAIRS! THAT'S WHERE THE BED-ROOMS OUGHT TO BE!

LOOK--ALL THE BEDROOMS YOU WANT! TAKE YOUR PICK, FELLOWS! BUT DON'T ASK FOR ROOM SERVICE!

WE'RE WITH YOU!



DRIPPING THEIR NIGHTSHIRTS, THE FOUR MEN ADJORNED TO DIFFERENT BEDROOMS AND SLEEP SOON CLAIMED THEM. BUT WONDERING OVER THEIR TROUBLED DREAMS FELT A TERRIBLE, UNIDENTIFIABLE FROSTING CONDENSED UP BY THE OLD MAN'S BREATHING.



WITH THEIR BODIES BATHED IN GOLDEN LIGHT, THE TWO CAUTIOUSLY MADE THEIR WAY TOWARD THE CLOSED DOOR BEYOND WHICH THERE WAS ONLY AN OMINOUS SOURCE!





REGAINING THE SANCTUARY OF THE STREET, THE FRIGHTENED TWO FOUND A CURIOUS CROWD WAITING.



BUT AS THE GROUP ENTERED THE FORBIDDEN PORTALS ONCE MORE...



BUT AS THE TWO SLURRY OUT OF THE HOUSE, THEY KNEW BETTER! NO--THEIR IMAGINATION WASHN'T PLAYING TRICKS ON THEM! THE VIVID PICTURE OF WHAT THEY HAD SEEN SEEMED TO SHAKEN EVERY FIBRE INSIDE OF THEM INTO A COLD KNOT OF FEAR.



NOT EVEN THE LIGHT OF DAY DISPELLED THE TERROR THAT CLUNG TO THEM AS THEY TRIED TO WORK J. AND AS NIGHT FELL, ONCE MORE...



THEIR MINDS STILL HOLDING TO THE HORRIBLE IMAGE OF WHAT THEY HAD SEEN, THEY FEARFULLY COOLED UP FOR THE NIGHT, AND THEN, SUDDENLY, IT WAS HEARD AGAIN!



A UNWARRANTED SCREAM SURFURRED THE STILLNESS OF THE AIR AND THEY FROSE AS IF THE COLD HAND OF DEATH HAD BEEN WAIVED OVER THEM!



THEY RAN TOWARD THE TENT FROM WHICH THE ALARMING YELL HAD COME, BUT EVEN BEFORE THEY SAW IT, THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WOULD FIND!



THE HAMMER--! IT KILLED HIM, TOO!

WHAT HAMMER--?











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